



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**

St. Paul District

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**Public Affairs**

# Corps Facts

## Spring Lake Islands

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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, has completed building four new islands, and protecting three existing islands and one peninsula, in the backwaters of Pool 5 in the Upper Mississippi River. This site lies within the boundaries of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge and is known as Spring Lake. The Corps' environmental restoration work here is to protect this shallow area of the river for the benefit of fish and wildlife by aggressively slowing the degradation of 500 acres of valuable backwater habitat.

### **Background**

Natural islands along the west side of Spring Lake had eroded and/or disappeared since the building of Lock and Dam 5 and the creation of pool 5 in the 1930s. Previously, these islands protected Spring Lake from the effects of the main river channel, reducing wind fetch and the associated wave action. Loss of the islands resulted in less vegetation in the lake, which, in turn, resulted in less food for fish and wildlife.

### **Description**

This project involved dredging sedimentation off the river bottom and hydraulically pumping the sand to form the islands. Rock was used to stabilize both the new and the old islands. The dredged material came from Spring Lake, which also created deeper areas in the lake for fish. Native prairie grasses were planted to stabilize the islands. Shrubs and trees will be planted in 2007 to further stabilize the islands and to enhance the habitat.

The Corps contracted with L.W. Matteson, Inc., of Burlington, Iowa, to build the islands. Work began in August 2004 and was completed in the spring of 2006. The islands cost \$3.5 million to build, all of which is being funded by the federal government. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources, as well as the public, participated in the planning and design process.

### **Program**

Building the islands is a project within the federal government's Environmental Management Program, or EMP. The EMP is a partnership of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey and the Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri and Illinois natural resource agencies. It is designed to restore and protect the natural resources of the Upper Mississippi River system. Since 1987, around 45 EMP projects have been completed, affecting more than 80,000 acres of river and floodplain habitat.